

## BOOK REVIEW

### New book: "Lyst og Nød. Træk af Kønssygdommenes Historie - Fra Pokker til AIDS" by Hugh Zachariae.

Publisher: Hovedland A/S, Stenvej 21B, DK-8270 Højbjerg, Denmark. E mail: [mail@hovedland.dk](mailto:mail@hovedland.dk), phone +45-86276500. Price 238 DKK

This is the new and second monography by professor emeritus of dermato-venereology Hugh Zachariae on the history of venereal diseases. The first monography, entitled *Kønssygdomme efter antibiotika og P-piller*, was published in 1974. The new monography refers to several classical papers, including works from Nordic colleagues and it refers to old Greeks and the Bible, seen from the perspective of today's debate. The history of syphilis and its influence on society from the late 1400 onwards is described in detail. The Danish perspective and a comparison with other countries, particularly Sweden, are included. As early as 1773, Denmark had as the first country in the world a law on protection against venereal diseases. The law had the principles of free treatment and the obligation of the

individual to be subjected to special examination, principles which have been maintained in the present regulations in the other Nordic countries but not in Denmark! Professor Zachariae has a mission with this monography, namely to point out that Danish authorities made a mistake when the HIV/AIDS epidemic started in that country. HIV/AIDS could have been covered by the existing law on protection against venereal disease, but the Danish parliament decided to expel this law and thereby the legal grounds for contact tracing for new cases of the infection, even though we know that such tracing can prevent new infections from taking place. This may be the reason why Denmark has approximately the same number of HIV/AIDS-infected persons as Sweden does, even

though the Danish population is considerably smaller. In Denmark no drop in chlamydia infections has occurred while a major drop in chlamydia has occurred in Sweden, since it was decided that this infection would be included under the law in Sweden.

The monography is an up-to-date contribution from a prominent Professor with a sharp personality to an area of burning interest to Nordic dermato-venereologists. At the same time the monography can be read and enjoyed by anyone with a special interest in the history of medicine.

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